

REMARKS

Claims 27-32 remain actively pending in the application. Claims 1-24 have been withdrawn and claims 25-26 have been canceled.

The Examiner has rejected applicants' claims 27-32 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by the Grainger, et al. (U. S. Pub. No. 2002/0065675 A1) reference. In order to overcome this rejection, applicants intend to rely on applicants' Japanese priority document (Japanese Patent Application No. 2000/143354, filed May 16, 2000) to establish an effective filing date for the subject application of May 16, 2000.

The Grainger, et al. reference has at best an effective filing date of November 27, 2000 which would be after the above-mentioned May 16, 2000 effective filing date of the subject application. Accordingly, relying on the effective filing date of May 16, 2000 for the subject application would remove the Grainger, et al. patent as a validly citable reference against the application.

Applicants have already filed a certified copy of applicants' priority document, i.e., Japanese Patent Application No. 2000/143354. Applicants will be filing shortly a certified translation of the priority document so as to complete the necessary filings to be able to rely on the filing date of this document as the effective filing of the subject application.

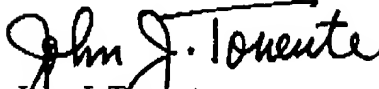
Applicants submit, therefore, that upon the filing of the certified translation, the Grainger, et al. reference will no longer be citable and the Examiner's rejection will have been overcome. Accordingly, at that time reconsideration and passage of this application to issue is

respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,


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